

# 108 County eyes inclusion in trail system

## Iowa Great Places program would help connect area communities.

**BY STACIE LETT**  
THE RECORD

The Dallas County Board of Supervisors, along with the Dallas County Conservation Board, wants to make Dallas County a great place.

Not that it isn't already a great place. But they want to make it great with a capital "G".

Dallas County Conservation Director Mike Wallace presented a proposal to the board of supervisors at the June 28 meeting to submit an invitation to the State of Iowa to participate in the Iowa Great Places program.

Wallace asked the board to supply him with letters of support to accompany the submission.

"We are very excited to have the opportunity to apply for participation in this program," said Supervisor Mark Hansen. "We want to support any city or organization in Dallas County to submit an invitation to be chosen as one of Iowa's 'great places.'"

Wallace was submitting an invitation to the state to assist

with a trails system that would include three counties and several cities between Ankeny and Woodward.

While Dallas County is a small piece of that project, the potential for benefit is great.

"We have many people in Dallas County that utilize our trails system," Wallace said. "This project will help to connect even more of the area to our trails systems in a very high-quality way."

The program was created through an order issued by Governor Vilsack earlier this year. It is designed to set up a "one stop shop" for communities wanting to make improvements to their communities, or see a particular project completed that would enhance its appeal to the public.

The Iowa legislature appropriated \$300,000 for the Iowa Great Places fund. Submissions outlining community projects and supporting documentation are due to the state by July 1. A citizen's advisory board will be formed that will choose three submissions for participation in the program.

Once a community or organization is chosen, a team of state workers representing several state agencies will be assigned to that organization and will work on a plan of action, utilizing all state resources available for that project.

Perry is among the other

Dallas County communities that have submitted documentation for this program.

"We have formed a committee and are actively working on the invitation," said Butch Niebuhr, Perry City Administrator. "It would be a great opportunity for the City of Perry to participate in this program."

In other business, Wallace also requested that the Supervisors fund the purchase of two parcels of land that are adjacent to current conservation projects.

"We are asking that money from the conservation conditional use fund be used, in addition to other funds, to purchase this land," Wallace said. "With land prices being what they are, we think it is important to move on this land now."

The two projects consist of land totaling 35 acres and are adjacent to two existing conser-

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vation projects, the Big Bend and Kuehn conservation areas. The total cost of the purchase would be \$183,000. Wallace was hoping for \$60,415 to be paid from the conditional use fund.

"My understanding of the fund is that the money is to be left there to accumulate for a park project in the place that Hallett is currently mining," said Board President Kim Chapman. "The purpose of earmarking those funds was to be

able to put back some of what Hallett is taking out of the area in terms of natural resources. I know the discussion took place just after I came to the board, but that was my recollection of the decision that was made."

The concern from the board was not only the initial use of funds, but also the possibility for the continuing requests that would deplete the funds, leaving a shortfall when the time came for its intended purpose.

"If we start depleting these funds now, will you be back next year for more money, leaving insufficient funds for us to put in the park that we originally were saving for?" Chapman asked Wallace.

"Of course I will be back asking for funds," Wallace responded. "I have to ask for funds to get the projects done that I am expected to do. Those funds come from many different places, including personal donation and grants. We just have not been able to find that source of funding for this project."

Board member Brad Golightly joined Chapman in his concern.

"I just don't want you to think we are always going to be a source," he told Wallace.

The issue was tabled until an August meeting to allow for the board to research possible funding alternatives as well as the need for the land.

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